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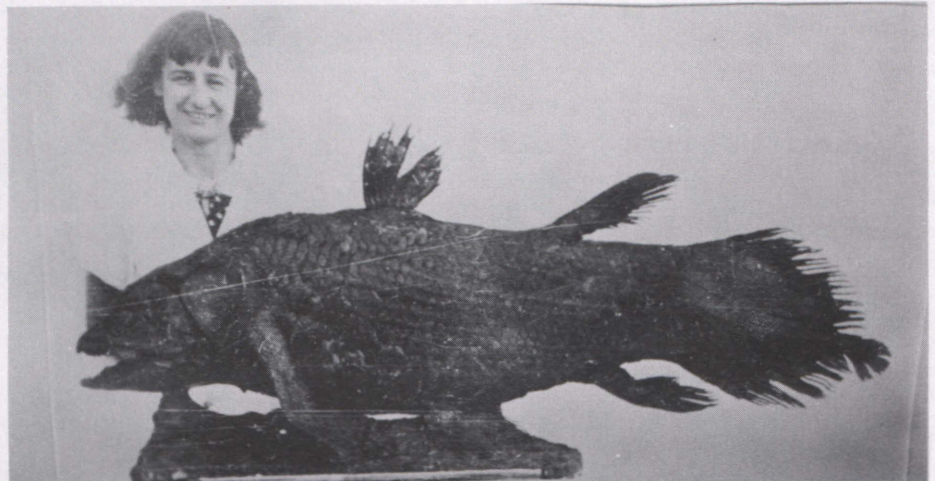
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SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

THE COELACANTH — 50 YEARS LATER



The first photograph of the newly-discovered coelacanth fish with Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, who saved it for science, taken in early 1939. The year 1989 marks the 50th anniversary of the discovery of what many call the most significant zoological find of the 20th century. (East London Museum.)

The day was December 22, 1938. In Europe, the clouds of war continued to gather following Hitler's takeover of Austria and Czechoslovakia. In isolationist and complacent America, Hollywood was putting the finishing touches to Gone With the Wind and The Wizard of Oz.

And in East London, South Africa, a 32-year-old naturalist named Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer was putting the finishing touches to the mounting of a fossil reptile in its new display case at the East London Museum. At 10 a.m. the telephone rang. It was a call that was to change Courtenay-Latimer's life--and the history of zoology--forever. A clerk at Irvin and Johnson, the fishing company, was calling to tell her that Capt. Hendrik Goosen had brought in some specimens for the Museum (see interview elsewhere in this issue).

Courtenay-Latimer finished the reptile display, wondering if it were worth going to look at the specimens. Well, it was

Christmas, she thought, and maybe she should at least greet everybody at Irvin and Johnson. So she called for a taxi to take her down to the dock.

When she got there, Captain Goosen and most of the crew had already left, but one deckhand on the Nerine showed her the pile of specimens they had saved for her. Nothing seemed that interesting. But then she noticed a curious blue fin protruding, which, on closer examination, proved to belong to a strange-looking, five-foot-long fish she had never seen before.

She decided to take it, and with Enoch, her assistant, she carried it to the waiting taxi. The taximan, however, didn't want a "stinking fish" in his vehicle, and it took some argument before he reluctantly relented, and the specimen was placed on a cloth inside the boot (trunk).

Back at the Museum, Courtenay-Latimer tried to determine

what the strange fish was. It looked very archaic to her. She remembered studying ganoid fish at school; could this be some such primitive form, long thought extinct? She went through her library, but found nothing even resembling it. Around noon, the Museum's chairman, Dr. J. Bruce-Bays, came by; he decided it was just a rock cod.

Undaunted, Courtenay-Latimer and Enoch took the fish by handcart to the hospital for possible preservation in the morgue. They were turned away. They then went to the Cold Storage Commission. The manager--curiously called Mr. Latimer--also refused to help: "No stinking fish in the cold storage!"

Finally, feeling like a "deflated balloon," she went to Robert Center, a taxidermist. He agreed it wasn't a rock cod, and offered to help. Courtenay-Latimer then obtained some formalin from a local chemist, and the fish was partly preserved (see interview elsewhere in this issue).

Meanwhile, she wrote to J.L.B. Smith, who taught chemistry at Rhodes University, in Grahamstown. Smith had become very knowledgeable on South African fishes, and had helped Courtenay-Latimer with identifications in the past. She included a drawing of the strange fish, in the hope that he would be able to determine what it was. Unknown to her, however, Smith and his new wife had gone to spend Christmas at their holiday house in Knysna, and her letter, which had to be forwarded, did not reach him until early January.

Years later, Smith was to describe his first reaction to the drawing in his 1956 book Old Fourlegs: "...I stared and stared, at first in puzzlement, for I did not know any fish of our own or indeed of any seas like that.... And then a bomb seemed to burst in my brain....

I was looking at a series of fishy creatures that flashed up as on a screen, fishes no longer here, fishes that had lived in past ages gone, and of which only often fragmentary remains in rocks are known.

"I told myself sternly not to be a fool, but there was something about that sketch that seized my imagination and told me that this was something very far beyond the usual run of fishes in our seas. It was as if my common sense were waging a battle with my perception, and I kept on staring at that sketch, trying to read into it perhaps more than it held."

And then: "Was this the fulfillment of the peculiar premonition I had always had?.... One of my most constant and peculiar obsessions had always been a conviction that I was destined to discover some quite outrageous creature, I had no idea what, but had come to suspect that it might be a true sea-serpent or something like that."

Realizing that the drawing seemed to depict a coelacanth (pronounced see-la-kanth), an animal far older than a mere dinosaur or plesiosaur, Smith cabled Courtenay-Latimer thus: "MOST IMPORTANT PRESERVE SKELETON AND GILLS FISH DESCRIBED." He then wrote her a letter expressing the potential importance of the find, but hesitant to say too much, lest he be mistaken.

However, when he was finally able to reach Courtenay-Latimer on the telephone, he learnt that all the internal parts of the fish had already been discarded by Center. All that remained were the skin and the skull, which remained in the mounted specimen. Frustrated, Smith was unable at the time to travel to East London. It was 350 miles distant over very bad roads, and he had piles of critical chemistry examinations to grade.



J. L. B. Smith. (J. L. B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology.)

He later also admitted that he didn't want to go "until I had built up a reserve of inner strength to stand the terrific strain it would mean if it were true. If I found that I could call it a coelacanth, or something like one, I expected to have to endure an initial storm of scorn and disbelief from the whole world of science until all the facts could be given to prove it was so."

In a subsequent letter, Smith, still incredulous, asked for a photo of the fish. However, the photos a photographer had taken--the only ones of the fish before skinning--had been ruined. There was nothing but to wait for Smith to go in person. And this he did on February 16, confirming that it was, in fact, a specimen of a living coelacanth.

The storm that followed enveloped the daily lives of Smith and Courtenay-Latimer for weeks, months, and even years. Newspapers all over the world carried the story, and letters from scientists and laymen alike began pouring in. The East London Museum gave Smith permission to take the specimen to Grahamstown for study, and many of his colleagues--as predicted--thought he had made a terrible mistake, one which would forever ruin his reputation.

The flood of mail included some colorful queries. One lady had an old violin; if she sent it to him, would he advise her as to its value? A man offered Smith a share in a treasure hunt based on an old pirate map. Declining these offers, Smith proceeded with his study of the fish way into the night, not letting it interfere with his daytime academic duties.

His formal description of the first living coelacanth was published in the British scientific journal *Nature* on March 18, 1939. Gradually, the world of science accepted the reality of the coelacanth, and the world in general forgot about it completely by September, when World War II erupted.

Why was the discovery of a living coelacanth so important? Smith's initial reaction, as outrageous as it seemed even to himself at the time, had been correct. The fish was a coelacanthiform, an order of ancient lobe-finned fishes known as the *Crossopterygii*. Coelacanth evolution dates back to the Upper Devonian, about 400 million years ago. These fishes existed long before the dinosaurs were even thought of. And they continued to exist long after the dinosaurs--and many other "newer" forms--became extinct, over 60 million years ago.

With hardly any change over 400 million years, it is the oldest vertebrate form known to exist today, and if any animal has the right to be called a "living fossil," as misleading as this term can be, it is the coelacanth. The most recent coelacanth known prior to the 1938 discovery is the genus *Macropoma*, which disappeared from the fossil record about 80 million years ago. In all, fossil coelacanths are represented by about 70 species in 28 genera and four families.

Fossil coelacanths had been known for about 100 years (most of these had been much smaller,

less than 2 feet in length, while the largest living ones reach 6 feet), but to have live specimens with soft tissue, not just fossilized representations, was of tremendous benefit to science, not just for further understanding the development of these strange forms, but also for better understanding the processes of evolution itself.

Biologically and physiologically, living coelacanths are unique. Most of the skeleton is composed of cartilage. The "backbone" is merely an oil-filled notochord. Many of its internal organs are in some ways archaic, yet also advanced, as they are perfectly suited to its mode of life today. (For further details, see bibliography elsewhere in this issue.)

As much as anybody, Smith himself realized the importance of the discovery. The coelacanths and the extinct rhipidistian fishes were thought to be in the lineage which eventually gave rise to the tetrapods (all land vertebrates): the amphibians, the reptiles, the birds, and the mammals -- including humans.

Thus, for a long time, the coelacanth was thought of as a "missing link" (another misleading Victorian term) between fishes and land vertebrates. Over time, this view has been modified, and many now think that coelacanths share an ancestry with the lineage which eventually gave rise to the lungfishes and the tetrapods. In this more modern view, although the coelacanth is very old and marvelous, it does not represent a transitional form ("missing link") from fish to amphibian.

After the 1938 discovery, Smith continued his search for a second, complete specimen. He was convinced that the first specimen was caught outside of its normal range; perhaps it had been brought down to South Africa by the Mozambique current? He had by now abandoned chemis-

try completely, to dedicate himself full time to fishes. For years during his collecting expeditions he inquired of the strange fish among fishermen all the way up the east coast of southern Africa, distributing trilingual posters offering a reward.

It took 14 more years for a second specimen to turn up, in the Comoro Islands between Mozambique and Madagascar--Smith's hunch had been correct--where fishermen had known of it for generations as *kombessa*. On December 24, 1952, he received a cable from a fisherman named Eric Hunt informing him of the find, but Smith was unable to get to the Comoros, and it being Christmastime--again!--he was unable to contact any senior academic or governmental officials for help.

In desperation, the Prime Minister was approached, and Dr. Malan immediately placed a South African Air Force transport aircraft at his disposal. The crew, which had been pulled from Christmas leave to collect a "dead fish," soon warmed up to the mission, and Smith returned in triumph to Cape Town--and the Prime Minister--with the second and complete specimen. The news made world headlines again, and Smith was fully vindicated. In truth, few human dramas have had such colorful and satisfactory endings.

Smith died in 1968, and his wife Margaret Smith continued his work through the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology until her death in 1987. Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer continued to build up the East London Museum until her retirement in 1973, after serving as curator for 42 years.

After the second find, coelacanth research was taken over by the French, who then controlled the Comoros. The work became international by 1972, when a joint French-Anglo-American ex-

pedition was conducted, followed by an expedition by the California Academy of Sciences in 1975. Today, about 200 coelacanth specimens are known. However, no specimen has ever survived capture for more than a day or so.

In 1987, a major development occurred when a West German team in the small submersible Geo observed and filmed for 8 hours six coelacanths in their natural habitat at a depth of several hundred feet. The team, headed by Hans Fricke of the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Physiology, observed the natural feeding habits and locomotory movements of the fish for the first time, including peculiar "headstands."

Fricke also teamed up with Eugene Balon of the University of Guelph in Canada and Mike Bruton, the new director of the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology in Grahamstown, and together they conducted an on-site investigation of the status of coelacanth. The result was great concern over the survival of the species, and the creation of the Coelacanth Conservation

Council (see separate article, this issue). They believe that Comoran fishermen, who previously caught occasional coelacanths incidentally, now target the fish for financial gain, as specimens are in great demand by museums and private collectors.

This concern was recently heightened by announcements of planned attempts to bring back live specimens for aquaria. One current project sponsored by the New York Aquarium and the Explorers Club has not yet been successful, but the project has provided two new valuable specimens for the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, which has made them available to about 30 American scientists.

Fricke, Balon, and Bruton are greatly concerned that failed attempts to capture live coelacanths--and keep them alive--could reduce the population, which might already be on the brink of extinction. A successful capture could be even worse, resulting in a mad rush by aquaria worldwide to collect their own live specimens, which could quickly decimate the spe-

cies.

Ominously, the Toba Aquarium in Japan is planning a \$1.7 million project to "bring 'em back alive." The Japanese project, which will use a remote-control TV camera and a baited cage, will begin in late 1989. Dismissing criticism by Fricke and Bruton, the Japanese state that they do not believe the species is close to extinction.

Fricke, meanwhile, has plans to search for other coelacanth populations with his submersible. Perhaps some do live in South African waters. There are also hints that some--perhaps belonging to a different species--may inhabit the Mediterranean or the Atlantic.

After 400 million years, the coelacanth holds on tenuously to its existence on the planet, an existence which, just over 50 years ago, would have been deemed "impossible" in the first place. Whether the species itself will be around for its 100th anniversary will probably depend entirely on our own species. □

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

Hendrik Goosen was the trawler captain whose nets brought up the first coelacanth in December of 1938. Now retired and still living in East London, South Africa, Captain Goosen, 84, remembers that day 50 years ago.

Greenwell: As I understand it, you had been fishing in your trawler for several days, and you and your crew were returning to East London when you sailed to the mouth of the Chalumna River to trawl some more?

Goosen: Yes, but I was only trying to catch fish for the East London Aquarium. I had all the fish I needed.

Greenwell: I've heard there are a lot of rocks there?

Goosen: Yes, but we couldn't fish on rocks. We had to fish off to the sides of the rocky areas. We tried to get as near to the rocks as possible. That's where we used to get interesting fish for the Aquarium. I used to get live fish for the Aquarium, as well as specimens for the Museum.

Greenwell: Weren't you taking a risk by fishing near rocks? Couldn't they damage your nets?

Goosen: Yes, but the closer you get to the rocks, the better the chance of catching interesting fish and things like that, because they live on the rocks, not on the sand.

Greenwell: You caught what,

about a dozen interesting fish that day?

Goosen: Well, the bag was too big, and that killed all the small stuff, so I didn't bring in any for the Aquarium at all in that haul. I only got the coelacanth and a few other things I kept for the Museum.



Hendrik Goosen, 1989.

Greenwell: It was alive when you first saw the coelacanth, wasn't it?

Goosen: It was alive, yes, and at first I was going to put it in a tank to keep it alive, but I changed my mind because I didn't want to break the tank. I would have to break a partition in the tank. It wasn't long enough to put the fish in. I had a tank with running water. I meant to keep it alive, but I had such a beautiful tank, I didn't want to break the inside of it. So I thought, no, let it die, and I'll give it to the Museum instead.

Greenwell: Is it true that the fish was snapping?

Goosen: I lifted up its lip to have a look at its teeth, and it snapped its jaw shut. It didn't bite at me, or anything like that. It just snapped its jaw shut. It didn't like me opening its mouth.

Greenwell: Did you recognize then that it was a very peculiar

fish?

Goosen: Oh, yes.

Greenwell: So then what happened?

Goosen: Well, then I brought it in to East London, and when we put into shore I asked one of the clerks to phone Miss Courtenay-Latimer and tell her to come and have a look at it, to see if she wanted it. And then I left on my annual leave.

Greenwell: How long were you gone?

Goosen: Nearly a month. I left on that day, December 22nd, and I was gone nearly a month.

Greenwell: So you didn't find out what was going on until you got back?

Goosen: That's right.

Greenwell: And then Miss Courtenay-Latimer told you about it? What did you think then?

Goosen: Oh, I thought it was marvelous. A very rare find. When I first got back, of course, we still didn't know what it was. That was still before Miss Courtenay-Latimer had it identified.

Greenwell: What does it mean to you today? How do you feel about it now, 50 years later?

Goosen: Oh, not much. It was marvelous catching it, but....

Greenwell: It seems to have had an impact on people's psyches all over the world.

Goosen: I suppose it's because it was thought to have been extinct for so many millions of years. That's why it's been so very important to everybody.

Greenwell: Do you feel strange about that?

Goosen: Well, if we hadn't caught it, there would be no coelacanth story. □

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer went to work as curator of the East London Museum when it opened in 1931. Her efforts saved the first coelacanth for science seven years later. In 1971, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy by Rhodes University. She retired from the Museum in 1973, and continues to live in East London. On February 15, 1989, she shared her memories with Editor Richard Greenwell.

Greenwell: Now, how did it all begin? I remember that you were a young naturalist, and you always wanted to go to Bird Island, and young ladies were not supposed to go off alone to bird islands! Tell me about it.

Courtenay-Latimer: My mother's people were British settlers, and on their old farm they had a

big, double-storied house, and the rays of the Bird Island lighthouse always flashed onto the windows when I was a very little girl. I used to be fascinated with that. This Bird Island lighthouse became something really very wonderful to me as a child. I used to dream about going to Bird Island, even when I started at the East London Museum in 1931.

Greenwell: How old were you then?

Courtenay-Latimer: I was born in 1907, so you work that out! Anyway, the Carnegie Corporation people came to South Africa, and they suggested that I go to Cape Town to work at the South African Museum for a while. So I went down to work in Cape Town. And at one of the dinners or functions I met Captain Patter-



Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, 1989.

son. Never in my life did I try to vamp anybody as I tried to vamp him, as he was the one who gave permission to go to the islands! But he said, "No, no, no! No ladies go to Bird Island!" So I asked him, "What if I could get one other person to go with me, one other lady?" And he said, "Oh, well, then I'd see." So when I came back, I asked my mother, "Would you go to Bird Island with me?" My mother and I were really close, and she said, "Yes, of course I'll go to Bird Island with you." And we wondered what my father was going to say about it all. Anyway, I told Captain Patterson that I could get one other lady to go to Bird Island with me, so he sent the permit. And then the trouble started, because my father wasn't a bit keen or interested in losing his wife for such a long period of time. You had to go in a packet boat.

Greenwell: And you wanted to spend several weeks there?

Courtenay-Latimer: I wanted to spend several months there. So, anyway, all was fine, and very grudgingly he allowed my mother to go with me. I went down to Port Elizabeth and got all the supplies, and got everything fixed up and ready to leave on the packet boat the next morning.

Greenwell: And there's a story that at the last minute--

Courtenay-Latimer: --At the last minute my father wired to say that he would be on the train, and that we were to meet him at 8 a.m. I was terrified that he was going to stop me from going to Bird Island after all my struggle and preparations.

Greenwell: But he came to go with you. That must have made you very happy.

Courtenay-Latimer: No, I was very cross.

Greenwell: Why?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, knowing my Dad, he'd be bored stiff.

Greenwell: How long were you out there, then?

Courtenay-Latimer: We were on the island for 4 months.

Greenwell: What did he do all that time?

Courtenay-Latimer: Grouched and grumbled. There was no reading, and it was a case of just the wireless [radio]. It was just when Edward was abdicating, so we were all listening to the reports, and it was all "over to you," and "back to you," and so on.

Greenwell: Did you collect a lot of specimens?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, I collected boxes and boxes of specimens. Fifteen packing cases of boxes.

Greenwell: And isn't that when you first met Captain Goosen?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, they had been out to sea. There were a lot of rabbits on the island, so they came to get rabbits for fish meat. I was busy skinning and mounting birds, and wondering how I was going to get these things back to East London. So, he said he would take them back for me if I wasn't in a hurry. He'd take one case at a time as he came in to call at East London. This is what he did. After all the cases had been delivered, he himself continued collecting specimens for me.

Greenwell: You mean when he was at sea, if he saw something interesting--

Courtenay-Latimer: --He collected everything. Starfish, and fish, and all kinds of things.

Greenwell: So he went out of his way to help you?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. He was always very helpful. He was a very kind man. He used to phone, and I'd go down to the dock by taxi and bring the things back, and mount them.

Greenwell: Usually, when you got down to the dock, he was already gone, so you didn't actually see him that often?

Courtenay-Latimer: That's right. And that's exactly what happened on the 22nd of December, 1938. Irvin and Johnson, the fishing company, phoned to say that there was a ton and a half of sharks for me, and I said, "What am I going to do with that lot?" I was busy preparing a fossil for a display case, but I thought I'd at least go wish them a Happy Christmas.

Greenwell: You almost didn't go, isn't that right?

Courtenay-Latimer: I hesitated. I hesitated, but then I thought of how kind they had always been in bringing specimens in.

Greenwell: So part of it, then, was just to say "hello" for Christmas?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, because it was the 22nd of December.

Greenwell: What would have happened, then, if you hadn't gone down?

Courtenay-Latimer: They would have thrown the things overboard, including the coelacanth.

Greenwell: What would have happened then?

Courtenay-Latimer: Nothing would have come of it.

Greenwell: And Professor Smith would never have searched for one, and maybe we wouldn't know about it today. When you got there, were the fish still on the deck?

Courtenay-Latimer: The fish were still up on the fo'c'sle.

And it was piled up with all these seaweeds and starfish, and redbait fish, and small sharks.

Greenwell: So these were things they didn't want. So you started rummaging through them?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, it was very hot. It was just before Christmas, when summer begins down here, and I didn't have containers or anything, and formalin at that time was very hard to get hold of. It meant I would have to see to the things very personally and mount and preserve them. So then, as I was kind of moving about, I saw this blue fin sticking out from beneath all the stuff. And I moved the stuff out of the way, and there was this beautiful, beautiful fish. It looked like a beautiful china ornament. Just too beautiful, a beautiful blue, and iridescent.

Greenwell: It was dead by then?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, yes. Anyway, Captain Goosen had already left, and when I asked this man on the boat what it was, he said, "Oh, madam, it's a funny fish. It snapped at the Captain's finger after it was trawled." So I said, "Well, I'll definitely take this fish." Then my mind was going around in a whirlwind, because I thought, "What can it be?" I'd never seen a fish like this. Big, hard, bony scales.

Greenwell: How many fish were there, do you think? Was there really a ton and a half?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, no, they were just pulling my leg! There must have been 10 or 12, but it was mostly all seaweeds and starfish. About a dozen fish, and the rest were starfish.

Greenwell: So the coelacanth was sort of stuck there under that stuff, and then you saw the fin. They had saved that one fish especially, hadn't they, thinking that was the one you'd be most interested in?



Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer at the dock where she found the first coelacanth 50 years before. "It looked like a beautiful china ornament."

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, Captain Goosen had told them to keep it. He later told me that he had first tried to put it into a tank, but the fish was too big.

Greenwell: To keep it alive, you mean?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. So then I put it onto this new bag I had, and Enoch, my native assistant, and I carried it down to the taxi which we'd taken, and then the taxi man said he wasn't having any stinking fish in the car.

Greenwell: How did you win the argument with him?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, then I said to him, "For goodness' sake, if you came down to pick up the fish"--this is what I could never understand about him, because the taxi people knew me, and I always used to go and get a taxi to go down there.

Greenwell: How many times had you done this?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, often. I came back from Bird Island in 1936, and it had been going on since then.

Greenwell: How often did you go down--once a week?

Courtenay-Latimer: No, every time they came in, which would perhaps be about once a month, sometimes longer.

Greenwell: So it was 10 or 12 times a year, something like that?

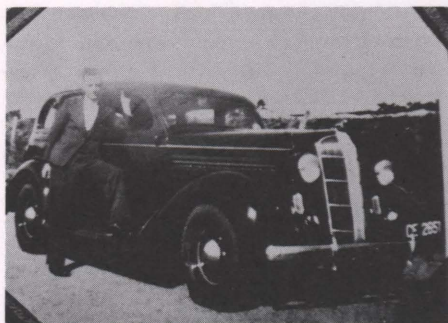
Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, and they always brought in stuff. They always brought in something.

Greenwell: So the taxi people were really used to you?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, yes, and that's why I couldn't understand why this man was arguing.

Greenwell: What did you say to him?

Courtenay-Latimer: I said, "Well, you knew you came down to fetch fish. If you're not interested in taking the fish back, you go back and I'll get somebody else." So then he said, "Oh, all right." And he stood there with his hands on his hips while Enoch and I put the fish carefully into the boot of the car. He took us up to



The taximan (Harrolds) who didn't want a "stinking fish" in his cab. (East London Museum.)

the Museum, and I paid him for the trip, and then we took it inside, and I dumped it onto the table where I'd just finished mounting the fossil. And then started the game. Now, I went all through the meager library that I had. Nothing. Nothing that even resembled the fish. But it was this idea of mine that it was something very primitive, and I thought to myself, "This must be a ganoid fish, with these strange scales." But then a ganoid fish to me was a fossil fish, and how could it be a fossil fish when this thing was alive? It was quite an impossibility, but now it was a must that I had to save this thing, whatever happened.

Well, then the Chairman of the Board came in, and I said, "Look at this beautiful fish that Urvin and Johnson trawled," and he said, "Oh, it's just a rock cod." And I said, "Oh, no, it's not a rock cod. It's got this funny little puppy-dog tail. Look at it. Look at the scales, it's not a rock cod." So he just turned--he was a very sarcastic old gentleman--and he said, "It's a rock cod!" That was my chairman, Dr. J. Bruce-Bays. He was a medical doctor. So then I thought to myself, well, maybe I should go over to the hospital and ask the morgue to put it in there until I can get somebody else to help me."

Greenwell: You mean to freeze it?

Courtenay-Latimer: Anything to

preserve it. So, in the meantime, I sent Enoch down to Mr. W. E. Sargent, who always let us have a hand truck. Mr. Sargent was a board member, and he had a bicycle shop or something. So I sent Enoch down, and back he came with the trolley, and we put it carefully on it to take it down to the hospital. I had phoned the hospital, but I couldn't get an answer, so I thought we'd just better go over and show it to them. It was the funniest thing. I was only a slip of a girl, you know, not like I am now. I mean, this man at the morgue was tall, and he drew himself up to a terrible height, and he said he had never heard of such an iniquitous idea, and what on earth did I think everybody was going to say? And I said it was such a beautiful thing, and they were all in a deep sleep anyway and wouldn't know anything about it! His answer was, "No, no, no, no, most definitely not!"

So, very deflated, I then decided to go down to the Cold Storage Commission. Now, the Cold Storage was run by a man named Andrew Latimer, but he was no relation of mine. So we went in to see Mr. Latimer, and I said, "Just come and look at this beautiful fish!" He wasn't

interested one scrap, either. He said, "I won't have any stinking fishes in the cold storage." Well, then I really felt like a deflated balloon, and so then I thought I'd take it down to old Mr. Center.

Mr. Robert Center, a Scotsman, used to do taxidermy for us, but he was not into fish, not by any means. So we arrived at Mr. Center's, and I said, "We've got a wonderful fish here, and we'll have to do something with it. We've been all around the town trying to get it saved, and nobody wanted to know my troubles." So he looked at it, and I said, "Have you ever seen a fish like that?" By then the color was fading, because it was afternoon. He had this strange way of saying "the very same, the very same." He'd never seen anything like it. So I said, "Well, we've got to try to save it." "Oh, yes, the very same, the very same. If you can get some formalin," he said, "we'll be able to do something about it." So I said, "Well, I'll leave it here, and I'll go down to the chemist, James Forbes, and get him to give us some formalin."

So off I trotted to Mr. Forbes. Now, these were long



The original East London Museum, 1989. It is now part of a technical college. Courtenay-Latimer's old office is behind the staircase.

walks across town. I left the fish there, still on the truck. Mr. Forbes gave me about 1½ gallons of formalin, and then he said to me, "Well, now, you have to get some sheeting or something." So then I went to get some sheeting from my mother--there were no buses or anything--and back I went again to old Center, and we steeped it in this little bit of formalin that we had, and we bound it up in the sheeting very carefully and put it into this cool room, and put newspapers over it. Well, that was the 22nd.

Greenwell: Once you got it in there and everything, I suppose you sort of breathed a sigh of relief and thought, "What do I do now?" At that point, you still had absolutely no idea what it could have been?

Courtenay-Latimer: No idea. It was a primitive fish, that I knew. The more I looked at it, the more wonderful I thought it was.

Greenwell: So you decided to write to Professor Smith. You had dealt with him before, I think?

Courtenay-Latimer: I first met Professor Smith when I was out in the field collecting. I was very busy getting specimens for the Museum off the rocks, and he came over to ask me what I was doing, and I told him I worked at the East London Museum and was collecting specimens. That's how our friendship started.

Greenwell: What year was that?

Courtenay-Latimer: That must have been 1932 or 1933. I used to spend all my spare time collecting for the Museum. We had no collections at all, so I spent all my weekends collecting. Anyway, he said he'd like to come and see the Museum, and that he used to do.

Greenwell: So you decided to send him a drawing of this par-

ticular fish?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. After I went to Bird Island, and Captain Goosen began bringing me fish, I used to get J.L.B. Smith to help me with identifications. When he came in, I used to show him what we had, and what we didn't have, and we became great friends. So, in desperation, I thought to myself, "Well, I'll get in touch with Dr. Smith." So I wrote to him with the drawing, and then I phoned Dr. Reeney. He was a geologist, and they both worked at Rhodes University. And Dr. Reeney said that J.L.B. wasn't in at the moment, but he'd give him a message. And I waited and waited and waited, and nothing happened. Then I phoned Dr. Reeney again, and he said, no, unfortunately he'd gone down to Knysna for Christmas.

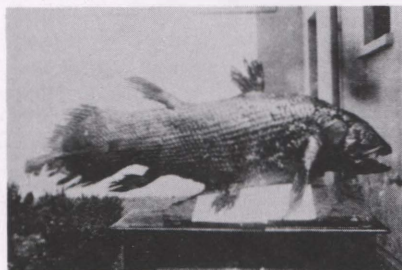
Greenwell: He had a cottage there, didn't he?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. Well, we waited for an answer, and by the 27th, I said to Mr. Center, "I think the best thing is to skin it and save what we can."

Greenwell: Smith didn't have a phone at Knysna, did he? You couldn't phone him?

Courtenay-Latimer: He used to phone me, but I wired him in between, but in those days a wire was a shilling for 12 words. Anyway, we phoned, and then we wired, and then we phoned, and then we wrote, and so on, backwards and forwards.

Greenwell: So it took several weeks?



The first photographs of the coelacanth after being mounted by Robert Center. (East London Museum.)

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, it wasn't until mid-February when he finally was able to come over. I remember it was pouring rain. We'd had no rain for 6 weeks. He arrived on February the 16th.

Greenwell: That's tomorrow?

Courtenay-Latimer: That's 50 years tomorrow.

Greenwell: And it's been raining today. Now, what about the photos you took?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, by that time, the coelacanth had been more or less mounted. Temporarily mounted by Mr. Center. Now, I only had a Brownie camera. I took photographs, the first and only photographs of the fish before mounting, but this man by the name of Kirsten, in going to develop the roll, dropped the spool, and the whole lot was lost.

Greenwell: Lost to history.

Courtenay-Latimer: Lost. Absolutely lost. But then once it was temporarily mounted I took more photographs, and then J.L.B. came over.

Greenwell: Of course, he was very upset when he found that most of the fish had been discarded.

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, then, you see, I only got his wire in early January. In the wire, he said to save the viscera. But by that time Mr. Center had already discarded it because we couldn't get enough formalin. If we could have dumped that



into formalin--it would have been better if we had not tried to save the outside of it, and used that for the inside. But by that time Mr. Center had discarded the viscera. I didn't discard it, he had discarded it, because he had no place to keep it.

Greenwell: So what was left was the skin and the head.

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. Mr. Center used to skin fish on the side. Usually, when you mount fish, you do them on the side, but in this instance I asked Mr. Center to skin it down underneath, from the chin right down, under the neck. And that saved everything as far as the skin was concerned.

Greenwell: But the rest went.

Courtenay-Latimer: The inside went.

Greenwell: I remember there was talk of going to the garbage dump and looking for it.

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, yes, yes, we went to the rubbish heap. I went down to go and look, but they dump all the stuff onto huge trucks....

Greenwell: When did you go?

Courtenay-Latimer: When I got J.L.B.'s wire in early January. He didn't come until the 16th of February. Oh, yes, it was a very long, long, wait. It was a lifetime as far as I was concerned.

Greenwell: And now it's been two lifetimes! What's your recollection of when he arrived? What happened exactly?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, he walked into the office. It must have been about half past 10 in the morning, and he said to me, "Lass, this discovery will be on the lips of every scientist in the world." Those were his exact words. He always called me lass. We were great friends

by that time.

Greenwell: Were you there when he got there?

Courtenay-Latimer: Of course I was there. Margaret Smith said that I'd gone down shopping. I hate shopping like poison, and after waiting all that long time, it was never me to go downtown shopping.

Greenwell: Did you know exactly what day he was coming?

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, yes. He had phoned to tell me he was coming over on the 16th, and I went over to work at 6 in the morning to have it ready.

Greenwell: In his book, Old Fourlegs, he had it that you were temporarily absent when he got to the Museum.

Courtenay-Latimer: I don't know why he said that, because I never was absent.

Greenwell: So what happened? You took him in and showed it to him. What did he do?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, that's what he said. He went and looked at it, and went all around it, it was on a big, big table--the table is still in the Museum--and he went all around, looking at it, and then he turned around and said to me, "Lass, this discovery will be on the lips of every scientist in the world."

Greenwell: So he could confirm right then and there that it was a coelacanth?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. Then the Dispatch photographer came, and he asked if he could photograph it, and J.L.B. said, "No, no, no, no photographs!" And I said, "Oh, for heaven's sake, all my photographs were lost, and you know, really, we do need a decent photograph of the thing." And so he said, "Well, one photograph." And I was to learn a lesson then, because

this man by the name of Evans took one photograph, and then sold it all over the country. We had to buy one back for 2 pounds!

Greenwell: Well, you learned your lesson. In those days that was a lot of money.

Courtenay-Latimer: That was terrible. All my salary was only 2 pounds a month.

Greenwell: How did you feel, then, when he said, "Yes, this is a coelacanth?" He'd mentioned in his letters to you that he thought it was a coelacanth. But when he examined it and verified it, how did you feel?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, I had known all along that it--I nearly could have identified it myself, because Gilchrist's book mentioned these ganoid fish, and if only I had the sense to realize that ganoid fish and these Crossopterygii were more or less linked, I would have classified it as a Crossopterygii.

Greenwell: So you already had a feeling as to what was going on?

Courtenay-Latimer: I knew more or less.

Greenwell: But even so, it must have been exciting to have someone else backing you up?

Courtenay-Latimer: It was the most wonderful feeling of relief, because up to this time I'd had nobody to help me. My chairman just said it was a rock cod, and finished with it!

Greenwell: And then you lent the fish to Dr. Smith to work on?

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, he said he wanted to have the fish to work on. So he took it away and, well, the story went into the papers, and everybody was crowding around to see the fish, but we had no fish. It was in Grahamstown. They were seeing

it in Grahamstown, but we didn't see why they shouldn't see it in East London. So then we asked for it back again. So, anyway, very reluctantly, he finally allowed us to have it back.

Meanwhile, I'd written to Dr. E. L. Gill, the Director of the South African Museum in Cape Town, to tell him that Mr. Center had mounted the fish, but it had not really been well mounted, and it needed quite a lot of reconstruction. Dr. Gill was my friend, and he wrote to the board and said we were very welcome to allow Mr. Drury, their taxidermist, who was a very good and very capable man--probably the best in South Africa--to see what he could do. Then, South African Railways covered my expenses to take the fish down to Cape Town. That was a great experience, because every time they changed guards, they'd come and say, "The specimen's quite happy. Resting quietly."

Greenwell: What happened in Cape Town?

Courtenay-Latimer: Well, when I got to Cape Town all the flags were flying because they'd had some important visitor down there, so the coelacanth and I went over to the South African Museum. Mr. Drury met us, and we sat and talked about the coelacanth, and everybody wanted to see it. And then old Mr. Drury said, "Now, that's enough." He pulled down all the blinds, and said, "Now don't allow anybody to come in here. I'm going to sit and think about the fish." So he took over, and I came back to East London on the 3rd of September. And that night, war was declared by England. I never forgot the fright, and everybody running around looking out of windows, wondering what was going to happen now that war had been declared. Well, then, of course, the coelacanth was safely down in Cape Town. I didn't have any more worries about the

coelacanth, and I went on with my work at the Museum.

Greenwell: So, ever since then, the fish has stayed at the East London Museum?

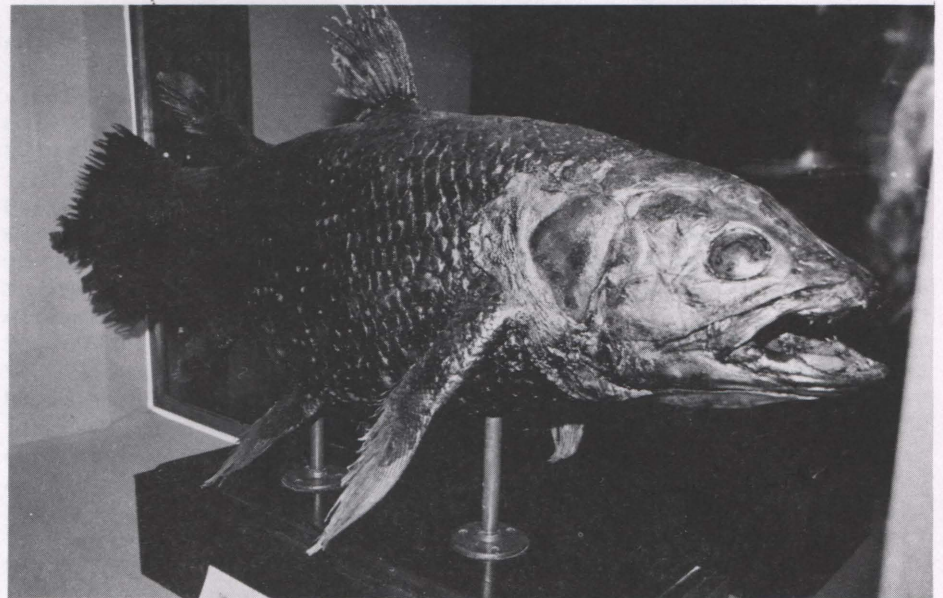
Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, once it came back from Cape Town. Anyway, then the war came, and then, of course, the coelacanth disappeared. Into oblivion. After the war, J.L.B. went up and finally found the second

one, in 1952.

Greenwell: And there was a lot of excitement again. But by then the focus had shifted from East London to Grahamstown, from you to him, really.

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, oh yes. They took over then.

Greenwell: Well, let me ask you this. It's been 50 years since the discovery. You've led a



The first coelacanth, 50 years later. This is the original type specimen for the species which is on permanent display at the East London Museum. The new mounting was done at the South African Museum in Cape Town several months after Robert Center's original mounting.



Tail of the first coelacanth, typical for the species.

full life, and I'm sure there have been periods in your life when you've done many other things, and probably not even thought about the coelacanth for days at a time, maybe. Who knows? What does it all mean to you today? You've been giving this a lot of thought, I'm sure, in the last few weeks. What does it mean to you?

Courtenay-Latimer: I think my life as a director of the East London Museum, building it up--it's been a really happy life. It's been a dedication of love, really. I never thought of myself; my museum always came first. And the coelacanth was part of that, and always something very, very special. With all the troubles and worries that I had, it was always there as one of my real treasures.

Greenwell: It was like a fairy tale come true. And while you were young still. So you had a whole life to--

Courtenay-Latimer: --to enjoy it. But be annoyed about it, too! Because there were moments when I was very annoyed about different things that happened, the different versions I heard, and the different tales. I've had heated arguments with people about them saying it was rotten when J.L.B. got it. It was never rotten, it never stunk, and it never will stink! I think the joy that I've got now is that East London has, at long last, really had the pleasure of having the honor of possessing the first coelacanth. And I think that all that striving that I had was of some worth, you know? For many years I thought, why? Why didn't I chuck it overboard and be finished with it? Then the other heartache I've always had is that Captain Goosen was never fully recognized, and I always felt that without Captain Goosen there never would have been a coelacanth.

Greenwell: Well, without him and without you.

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes, well, I took over from him, really, but if he hadn't saved it, and if he hadn't been a friend of the Museum, we never would have had it.

Greenwell: I have three children, and my oldest boy is named Darwin. Some years ago, he came home from school, and he was showing me his science textbook. He must have been 10 or 11 at the time. And I was flipping through it, and lo and behold, there was a whole page on the coelacanth. For children. There was a picture of it, and a picture of you, I think, and some discussion on it. And I said to him, "Darwin, I know all about this fish!" And I started telling him. And it was very strange, because there was my son learning about it, and I thought to myself, if Captain Goosen hadn't gone to fish off the Chalumna River that day, if the deck hands hadn't have saved it, if they hadn't called you, if you hadn't gone down to the dock, if any one of these things hadn't happened--

Courtenay-Latimer: --there would not have been a coelacanth.

Greenwell: There wouldn't have been a coelacanth. What do you think it means to people, a discovery like this? Over the years, you must have had a lot of letters from all over the world, a lot of visitors.

Courtenay-Latimer: Oh, people have come from all over to see the thing. When they write, they say that they are interested, but not really that it meant so very much to them.

Greenwell: Do you think there has been any other zoological discovery like it in this century?

Courtenay-Latimer: No, I don't think so. But I don't see why they shouldn't find some other fossil animals alive. I also think I've been a very privileged person, a very spoilt

person, really, because of the coelacanth. I've made friends all over the world, and where would I have made all these friends if it hadn't been for the coelacanth?

Greenwell: When I travel and meet people and I mention the coelacanth, it's strange that so many people have heard of it. They may not know how to pronounce the name, they don't know exactly what it looks like, they don't know how old it is, but they do remember it. It's like a little magic in people's lives.

Courtenay-Latimer: Yes. And there have been the most weird pronunciations!

Greenwell: So, I think we could say, in summary, that you have led a full life, and the coelacanth has been an important part of that. You're very happy about it, and you can look back now with fond memories. There have been some problems, but would you have done it any differently?

Courtenay-Latimer: No, never. If I came back to earth again I would do just what I did before, including the struggle for the coelacanth. I mean, it was really a hard struggle to save the thing, but I would do it again. Call it a woman's intuition; perhaps that's what it was. It's wonderful to know that that intuition, or call it what you may, is recognized 50 years later. It's been great fun. □

(The interviews appearing in this newsletter are abridged versions. The complete texts are available as a booklet entitled "Remembering the Coelacanth: A 50th Anniversary Retrospective," which may be obtained from the ISC Secretariat for \$5, postpaid.)

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This is the first time that a newsletter has been dedicated to a particular topic: the coelacanth. The period from December, 1988, to Spring, 1989 marks the 50th anniversary of the discovery and description of this "fossil" fish species.

Rarely has cryptozoology--or zoology for that matter--had an opportunity to celebrate such an important anniversary in recent times. Such will not occur again, I believe, until the year 2001, which will mark the 100th anniversary of Sir Harry Johnston's discovery of the okapi--the animal depicted in our Society's logo.

I traveled to East London, South Africa, in February of 1989 to meet Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, the person who saved the fish for science, and Capt. Hendrik Goosen, who had the presence of mind to save it for the East London Museum. I interviewed both of them, and also got to know them well. Now in their 80's, they were young people in their 30's when Fate thrust upon them the roles they were destined to play in this saga. And both still remember the events well.

On February 16, Miss Courtenay-Latimer and Nancy Tietz, the new director of the East London Museum, took me down to the dock; to where the trawlers of Irvin and Johnson used to unload their fish; to where the first coelacanth was first beheld by Miss Courtenay-Latimer. The Irvin and Johnson buildings are gone now. The world has changed a lot since then.

Later, we found the house of the taxidermist, Mr. Center, where Miss Courtenay-Latimer, in desperation, had finally taken the fish. Incredibly, she had not returned to the house in 50 years, but she said it looked just the same as it used to. The middle-aged woman who opened the

door had never heard of the Centers, so Miss Courtenay-Latimer turned to leave.

"Just a minute," I said, "Aren't you going to tell this lady why we are here?" "Oh, she won't be interested," she answered. "Have you heard of the coelacanth?" I asked the lady. "Yes, of course, the fish," she answered. "Have you heard of Miss Courtenay-Latimer?" I then asked her. "Yes, of course," she responded again, with a puzzled look on her face. "Well, this is Miss Courtenay-Latimer," I told her, "and the reason we are here is that this is where she brought the fish 50 years ago, to your house."

I don't recall what else the lady said, but it wasn't much. I do remember her standing there in the doorway totally bewildered, with an open mouth, a posture she maintained even as we drove away.

We then went to the old museum building, which is now part of a technical college. It was the exact day and time, 50 years before, that J.L.B. Smith had arrived at that building and examined the fish for the first time. Miss Courtenay-Latimer showed us around; and as she did so, I could tell that the memory of many events from times past welled up in her mind.

Afterwards, back at the new Museum, Captain Goosen and his wife showed up, and I gave my scheduled talk on cryptozoology. I could never have imagined that I might one day speak at the East London Museum, and that Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer and Hendrik Goosen would be sitting in the front row.

After East London, I drove to Grahamstown to visit the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, where I also gave a little talk. I was received with much courtesy by the director, Mike



Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer at Robert Center's old house 50 years later. "It looked just the same as it used to."

Bruton, and all the staff. I was even given my own key to the Institute, a gesture which I cannot imagine an American institution doing for a three-day visitor.

Besides the permanent coelacanth display in the lobby, which contains the second (1952) coelacanth, the Institute had set up a temporary 50th anniversary exhibit. This included many historical photographs, documents, copies of correspondence, and coelacanth memorabilia.

What attracted me most, however, was a large display, on a raised wooden platform, of many of J.L.B. Smith's personal belongings: fishing rods, microscopes, specimen jars, logbooks, hats, and all the many things he used over the years, now carefully preserved for posterity. The presence of J.L.B. is very real in the Institute, and being able to touch and hold some of his personal effects made my visit complete.

The story of the coelacanth is like a cryptozoological fairy tale. But all the events are true, and all the characters are real. For once, the hand of Fate had guided the pieces to the right places. That is what we can now remember, and celebrate.

J. Richard Greenwell
Editor

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For those interested in pursuing the coelacanth literature further, the above publications contain many more references. □

EAST LONDON MUSEUM

In 1931, a young naturalist named Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer became the first curator of the fledgling East London Museum, located on the south Cape Coast of South Africa. The Museum began on a shoestring--it did not even have a telephone--and Miss Courtenay-Latimer spent many years building up the first collections.

The discovery of the coelacanth on the eve of World War II boosted the Museum's standing, and over the years, with the growth of East London, it has evolved into an impressive educational institution. In recent years, it moved into a new, modern building, and it now operates under the directorship of Nancy Tietz.

The exhibit halls cover fishes, reptiles, birds, and mammals, and there is also a lecture hall. Not on exhibit, but locked away in a safe, is

the world's only known dodo egg. But the Museum's most cherished possession is the mounted specimen of *Latimeria chalumnae*, the centerpiece of the Museum's Coelacanth Hall. This is, in fact, the original type specimen for the species, the one that was dragged up by Captain Goosen's nets 50 years ago.

A visit to the south Cape Coast of South Africa should include a visit to East London, a delightful town, and to the East London Museum, the home of what many call the most significant zoological find of the 20th century. □

J. L. B. SMITH INSTITUTE

The J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology is located in the picturesque community of Grahamstown, about a two-hour drive inland from the south Cape Coast. It may well be the largest institution in the world dedicated exclusively to the study of fishes. With close ties to nearby Rhodes University, of which it was formerly a part, the Institute is a living legacy of the late J.L.B. Smith.

Smith was originally a chemistry professor, but his interest in fishes grew to such an extent that he eventually abandoned chemistry in order to dedicate the rest of his life to ichthyology. Half a century ago, upon Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer's discovery of the first coelacanth, Smith found himself in the enviable position of being the one to establish its identity and to describe the "fossil" species. After much effort, he obtained a second, complete specimen in 1952.

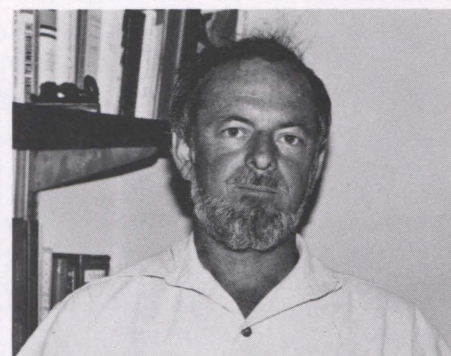
Following his death in 1968, Rhodes University established the Institute under the directorship of his widow, Margaret Smith, who had become an established ichthyologist in her own

right. In 1977, the Institute was moved to a new building, and today it continues to receive full support from the government, despite national economic hardships.

Margaret Smith stepped down in 1982, and died in 1987. The new director, Mike Bruton, has continued the tradition established by the Smiths, and sees himself as the next link in the chain that will ensure the continued study of the fishes of southern Africa.

The Institute has a fine library, and maintains a basement collection of more than 400,000 specimens. The Institute's main function is "to conduct scientific research on marine and freshwater fishes with particular reference to the fishes of Africa and adjacent oceans, and to communicate the knowledge gained to scientists and the general public."

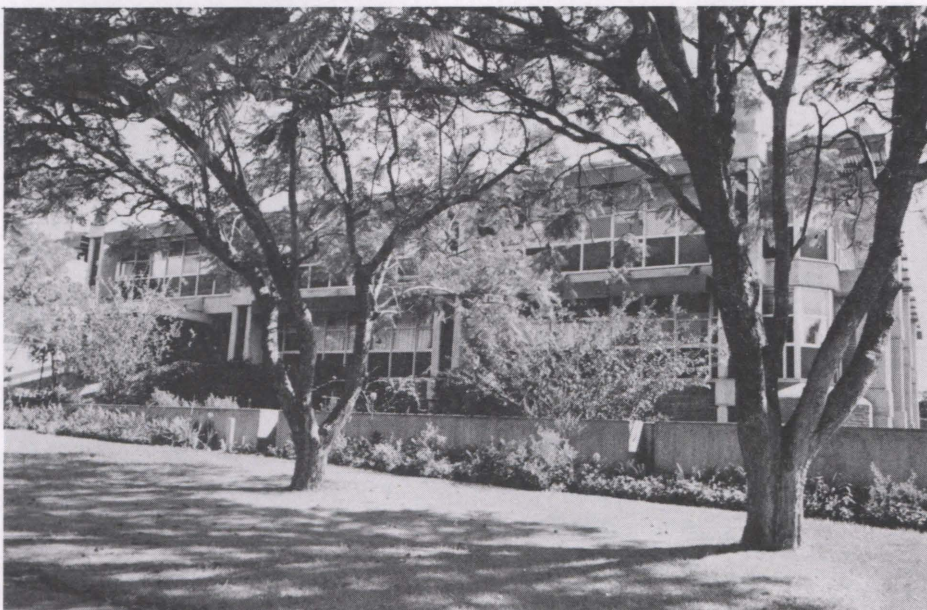
One of Institute's main interests is, of course, the coelacanth. The lobby contains exhibits on the first and second specimens, and the second specimen itself--the one obtained by Smith in 1952--is on permanent display. The public is always



Mike Bruton, new director of the J. L. B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology. "The next link in the chain."

welcome. The Institute also attempts to maintain a complete historical collection on everything related to the coelacanth, from publications to memorabilia. Thus, although most of the research conducted at the Institute concerns other species, the spirit of the coelacanth--and of Smith--is always very much present.

The Institute also publishes a non-technical newsletter titled *Ichthos*, which updates readers on African ichthyology and coelacanth developments. Those interested in subscribing should write to: *Ichthos*, Private Bag 1015, Grahamstown, 6140 South Africa. □



The J. L. B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, located near Rhodes University, in Grahamstown, South Africa.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF OLD FISHES

In the mid-1960's, when University of Washington biochemist George W. Brown was working on frozen coelacanth liver, he and his wife Susan decided to establish a society focusing on the continued study of the coelacanth, and this they did in the Society for the Protection of Old Fishes (SPOOF).

Two decades later, SPOOF is still going strong, with a 36th newsletter recently published. The Society is small, with fewer than 300 members, and its newsletter could be called irregular; sometimes two or three issues appear in a year, sometimes none. The newsletter is casual, both in format and content. Those seeking a fancy publication will not find it here. But they will find a camaraderie not often found in the modern world of science. Most SPOOF members have a keen sense of humor, which is most pronounced at SPOOF picnics and at the annual Seattle banquet.

Although the coelacanth is the main focus, SPOOF is also concerned with other "old fishes" and new discoveries, and its newsletter has even included

occasional items on marine cryptozoology.

Those interested in joining should write to Dr. George Brown, College of Fisheries, WH-10, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195, U.S.A. □

COELACANTH CONSERVATION COUNCIL

The Coelacanth Conservation Council (CCC) was founded in 1987 by a group of ichthyologists concerned that the coelacanth may be threatened with extinction.

Increasingly over the years, native fishermen of the Comoro Islands, its only known habitat, have been purposefully seeking this fish, whereas earlier in the century it was caught more by accident. The reason for this is a growing demand by museums, aquariums, and private collectors, many of whom will pay handsomely for a specimen.

Founders of CCC include Eugene Balon, at the University

of Guelph in Ontario, Canada (and an ISC member), Mike Bruton, director of the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, in Grahamstown, South Africa, who serves as CCC Secretary, and Hans Fricke, of the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Physiology, in Seewiesen, West Germany.

The objectives of the Council, among others, are: to coordinate research on both living and fossil coelacanths; to raise funds for research; to promote protective measures; to establish an inventory of all known specimens; to promote public education; and to publish bibliographies and a newsletter.

Initially, at least, the newsletter will appear within the journal Environmental Biology of Fishes, of which Dr. Balon is the editor in chief. Membership in CCC is US\$25. Those interested should write to Professor Mike Bruton, J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology, Private Bag 1015, 6140 Grahamstown, South Africa. □

(The Letters and Wood's Animal Facts columns will return with the next issue.)



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